

NEWS

and Information

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter from the Premier Trainer of Federal, State and Local Government Professionals

**We Are Saving
You a Seat**

**15th Annual Issues Seminar
for Secretaries and
Administrative Personnel**

May 13-14, 2002

**Wyndham Washington
Washington, D.C.**

March/April 2002



Downsizing a Steady Trend

The level of employees in the Executive Branch is the lowest since 1960; The Judicial Branch, the Postal Service, Commerce, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and state government are the only sectors that have an increase in employment. Agencies that have an employment decrease of more than 15 percent are: Defense (-30), Agriculture (-15), HUD (-22), Energy (-24), FDIC (-70), GSA (-32), NASA (-25), OPM (-43), SBA (-29), TVA (-32), Broadcasting Board of Governors (-71), AID (-45)

Legislative Branch
29,727

Judicial Branch
31,873

U.S. Postal Service
867,395

Executive Branch
1,761,378

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management; Office of Workforce Information; Monthly Report of Federal Civilian Employment (SF 113-A), 03/02/2001.

New Course Helps Employees Plan Ahead for Long-Term Health Care

Did you know that 40 percent of the people who use long-term health care are 18 to 64 years old? Long-term health care insurance is not only for health care for seniors, but for any time in life when employees or their relatives may be ill, injured or dependent on others for care. Long-term health care does not replace health insurance; rather it provides for long-term needs such as nursing home and assisted living facility care, formal and informal care in the home, and adult day care. This assistance is generally not covered by health insurance. Employees may need long-term health care for a serious accident, a stroke, the onset of a chronic disease such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's and other health care emergencies.



A new course, Long-Term Health Care, in the Graduate School's Retirement and Benefits curriculum, is being offered nationwide. This program is designed to help federal managers and employees understand the value of long-term health care insurance and the basics of the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) Federal Long-Term Health Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP). In this course, participants compare private long-term health insurance programs with FLTCIP.

"The minimum national average of expenses for nursing home care is \$6,000 a month and \$3,000 at an assisted living facility. Depending on where you live, these figures could be much higher," says Frank Riley, who teaches Long-Term Health Care for the Northeast Training Center. Riley, who recently retired from a career with the Treasury Department, says that women are the primary recipients of long-term health care because they live longer. "In addition," he adds, "in the courses I've been teaching, about two-thirds of the students are HR professionals who need to go back and explain this program to their employees; the other third are workers who are starting to think about retirement or who are worried about caring for their parents."

The course instructors, who like Riley are experts in federal retirement and benefits, explain through scenarios the complex issues involved in choosing long-term health care—including how to protect one's assets while preserving the best health care choice possible. Participants will learn what long-term health care is, the underwriting process for qualification, what it may or may not cover, how it relates to Medicare and Medicaid and how to interpret special provisions, including exclusions, deductibles and length of coverage. Participants will carefully weigh their needs and expected investment in order to make well-informed choices for purchasing long-term health care insurance for themselves and their families.

The Office of Personnel Management's FLTCIP, which was introduced in 2001, will have an open season enrollment beginning this spring and lasting through early fall 2002. For a listing of course dates and locations, see the back page of this newsletter.

SnapSho t

HR in the Future

- HR is forward looking. It monitors the environment, and it anticipates business opportunities and problems.
- HR shifts ownership of people issues to managers and employees. It influences managers to make hard people decisions.
- HR coaches managers and gives managers choices, but it does not actually solve managers' people problems.
- HR builds a sense of urgency and of continuous learning and improvement.
- HR uses technology and "e-Management" to manage people "remotely" and to do all HR faster, better and cheaper.

Excerpted from "Ten Tenets of 21st Century HR," Sullivan, John, *Workforce*, January 2000, Vol. 79, No.1, p.54, www.workforce.com.

OPM Answers Frequently Asked Questions



Who is eligible for FLTCIP?

OPM estimates that the "federal family" could exceed 20 million people. The individuals eligible for long-term health care coverage include: federal employees, annuitants, spouses of employees and annuitants, adult children, parents, parents-in-law and stepparents of employees (but not annuitants).

Is this the same as long-term disability insurance?

No. Long-term disability insurance pays you a percentage of your gross income should your sickness or illness prevent you from working for an extended period of time. The FLTCIP provides insurance to help you pay for assistance you may need, such as bathing and getting out of bed, due to a chronic illness or injury. There is no correlation in coverage to your job or salary.

I am caring for my mother who has Alzheimer's. Can this program help her and me?

The program may help you coordinate care for your mother, receive discounts on certain services and supplies and provide support to you as a caregiver. However, anyone who enrolls in FLTCIP must meet the underwriting criteria. Parents of employees will have to meet more underwriting criteria than the employees themselves.

For more information, visit OPM's Web site at www.opm.gov.

New HR Director Is a Proponent of Education



MJ Harris joined the Graduate School in August, 2001 as the director of human resources.

As the new human resources director for the Graduate School, MJ Harris brings a blend of professional experience—gained from 13 years of creating human resources departments “from scratch” for various start-up companies—and the credentials of an MBA from Johns Hopkins University and a Professional Human Resources certification from the Society of Human Resources Management.

Prior to joining the Graduate School in August, Harris worked with AmeriGroup Inc., a Baltimore-based health care company. Harris was attracted to the Graduate School because of its mission to educate adults: “One of the things I have learned having worked in different industries—utilities, retail, mortgage, health care—is that I need to believe in the mission of

the organization for which I am working. It has to have a mission that benefits others. Even though I’m not an educator, I am a proponent of education.”

Within the Graduate School, Harris plans to introduce a variety of programs. The topics for managers include training reinforcement on equal employment opportunity and communications techniques for staff meetings. Harris cites one-on-one training for new managers and supervisors as a priority. “Often when managers are new they may not be comfortable with their new supervisory responsibilities or are reluctant to ask questions early on—the one-on-one training will give them the basic tools to coach and counsel their staff.”

As part of the “One School” program, the human resources department now reports to Lynn Edwards in the Executive Director’s Office. Harris is enthusiastic about this and other “One School” initiatives: “I think the ‘One School’ concept is a great idea. Unity is so important; no one department or organization is an island. We need each other, to pull together, share resources and be working as a team toward the same goal.”

Course Addresses New Suitability Requirements



The Graduate School now offers nationwide a three-day Suitability Adjudication course for federal agency personnel staffs who are responsible for screening applicants, appointees and employees for suitability. This program addresses the changes to suitability regulations that have impacted the responsibilities of federal human resources employees.

These employees are responsible for identifying suitability issues and whether or not they can be dealt with by the agency or, instead, be referred for adjudication.

To ensure an effective review and referral system within agencies, course participants will learn the suitability adjudication responsibilities of individual agencies and examine the role of the Office of Personnel Management.

The course responds to a federal requirement that appropriate training in suitability issues be provided to agencies. Assigned personnel must be responsible for identifying suitability issues, ruling on objection requests and preparing and signing adjudicative action letters and handling related matters. In addition, each agency must designate program risk levels and competitive service positions and initiate any required investigations. Agencies must also maintain a suitability program that complies with administrative requirements.

The next available session of Suitability Adjudication (STAF8101D) will be May 21-23, 2002 in Atlanta. Tuition is \$545. On-site sessions can be arranged for agencies with sufficient demand; call (888) 744-GRAD to schedule an on-site session. For more information about dates and locations, visit our Web site at www.grad.usda.gov.



Partnership Builds Better HR Managers Partnership with SSA to Use Innovative Formats to Train HR Personnel

In the summer of 2001 the Social Security Administration (SSA) invited the Graduate School, USDA to “partner” in training its human resources managers, assistants and specialists. The agency’s succession planning efforts had identified a major need for development and training, and task forces developed a curriculum with required competencies for human resources personnel.

Because of the ongoing partnership, SSA has committed major funding, for both fiscal years, to the Graduate School for training delivered online, via satellite broadcast (interactive training at SSA), in the classroom, via correspondence and through CD-ROM. Already the Graduate School has delivered human resources training to several hundred SSA employees.

Our Faculty: Up Close

Faculty Profiles

Loretta Ellis



For eight years Loretta Ellis has taught equal employment opportunity, benefits and process management courses for the Western Training Center. Before joining the Graduate School, Ellis had retired early from a position as an employee relations specialist and personnel management trainer with the Office of Personnel Management in Seattle. At WTC, her pre-retirement courses are so popular that she has created a shortened format for other instructors to use. Ellis says she enjoys teaching because she can put her shyness aside. “I also like the instant feedback you get from working with the students.”

Ellis spots important trends in human resources management. “Especially during these times of downsizing I have seen more of an interest in preselection and issues related to employee morale. One agency has even hired an ombudsman whose role is to be a sounding board for employees.” Ellis also notes that recruitment is changing. “I see a growing emphasis on recruitment. Agencies are using special emphasis program managers more frequently.”

In Tacoma, Ellis spends her free time tending to her daughter’s thoroughbred mare. “We also have three dogs, and I love to read.”

Carol Hines



Transformational leadership, systems thinking, executive coaching and communications skills are just a few of the subjects Carol Hines teaches at the Leadership Development Academy (LDA). Hines and her husband run an organizational development and “personal best” consultancy. Both a certified mediator and a licensed psychotherapist, Hines, who prefers a highly interactive style of teaching, says she is “blessed with a gift for framing language in a way that students can see a different perspective and find the answers for themselves—to set goals and turn around self-defeating behaviors.”

At LDA Hines is active in the Congressional Fellows Program, has redesigned programs to meet OPM’s Executive Core Qualifications and has integrated the Leadership Executive Inventory into all the programs, including experiential learning projects, senior executive interviews and developmental and shadowing assignments. She sees several trends emerging in leadership training. “One is systems thinking—how do you build and sustain a long-term view of an organization? Another is the need for more spirituality in the workplace. Employees are asking for this—to be grounded in values and to value diversity.”

In her free time, Hines is “researching, writing, constantly learning. I spend time with my granddaughter, family and friends, playing cards, and I love the water.”

Survey Indicates Shift to e-Learning and New Training Topics



A November 2001 survey to determine the impact of the events of September 11 on training professionals indicates a shift toward more e-Learning, less travel and new training programs. Nearly one-quarter of respondents in this survey of American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) members and Web site visitors indicated that their use of technology to hold virtual meetings and classes had increased by 15 percent. Nine percent feel that this is an urgent priority.

Half of the respondents have seen no change in their job responsibilities, and nearly three-quarters have seen little or no change. However, one in every eight respondents said their professional work had been altered drastically or significantly. Those respondents who work primarily with e-Learning or for a supplier company were more

likely to have seen a change, and those who work in diversity, performance improvement and organizational development were less likely to have seen a change.

The most often mentioned effects include an increase in the use of distance technologies and e-Learning, reduced travel for both trainers and trainees and new topics for training—diversity, security, stress management and managing change. Other changes cited were budget restrictions, reduction in business and related layoffs, the development of security and evacuation plans and providing assistance to victims and families.

For more information on the survey, visit the ASTD Web site at www.astd.org.

News in Brief



The W. Edwards Deming Outstanding Training Award is presented annually to a federal government organization or civilian branch of the military in recognition of training excellence. The 2002 Deming Award winner will be announced at the Dimensions in Leadership Conference, scheduled for June 17-19 in Washington D.C. The Conference was previously known as the Leadership Development Academy Alumni Day. For more information, contact Deborah Eddington at (202) 314-3592.

The Government Auditing Training Institute (GATI) will launch a Certified Auditing Professional Exam Review Course on March 23 in Washington, D.C. This course prepares government auditors to receive their CGAP—Certified Government Auditing Professional designation. For more information, visit our Web site at www.grad.usda.gov or call Julie Sanders at (800) 326-7813 or (202) 314-3556.

The Leadership Development Academy, in partnership with the Federal Section of the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA), is planning to offer the IPMA's Human Resource Leadership program for mid-level (GS-11,12,13) human resources specialists later in 2002. Watch for details in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

New CDC video educates employees about anthrax. In response to recent bioterrorist events involving anthrax, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has developed an educational video for those who process, sort or deliver mail in a variety of settings—from small mailrooms to large processing and distribution centers. This 15-minute video includes basic information about anthrax, strategies for protecting workers from anthrax exposures and methods for detecting and responding to a suspicious letter or package. To order, contact the CDC at (877) 252-1200 (in the United States) or at (301) 645-7773 (internationally) or online at www.cdc.gov.

Message from the Executive Director



Every field has buzzwords, which represent the latest trends. Some of these trends come and go with little impact. But one trend is here to stay: workplace flexibility and organizational responsiveness. Experts in the field of human resources management cite workplace flexibility as a top trend that is certain to impact future work environments. For instance, the global growth of the contingency workforce—independent workers

such as consultants and contractors—is creating a demand for new human resources services and skills. Organizational responsiveness is required to meet these changes successfully.

Consider another significant trend: management reform in government. In response to the human capital crisis precipitated by the retirement of a significant percentage of federal managers over the next decade, the Bush administration has laid out a plan for management reform. This reform will be in five areas: strategic management of human capital, expanded electronic government, competitive sourcing, improved financial performance and budget and performance integration.

Our response? To deliver “Just-in-time programs” that meet changing needs—today and in the future. The administration’s proposed 2003 budget will include Executive Management Scorecards; agencies will receive scores in each of the five management areas outlined by the administration. The Graduate School has a unique opportunity to be a responsive organization and customize its training programs to assist agency managers to meet their scorecard objectives.

As the nature of government changes—through reforms that will invigorate and streamline its management practices—agency managers will be required to learn new skills to manage more efficiently. As the nature of government employees—the workforce—changes, human resources professionals will be required to obtain new skills for recruiting, managing and negotiating with a flexible workforce. For instance, a new nationwide telecommuting course, Telecommuting-the Roles of Supervisors and Managers, is offered for managers who are responsible for workers in various locations.

What is the bottom line? Whether it is meeting the needs of a human resources professional managing a flexible workforce or an agency head charged with management reform, the Graduate School offers an array of programs “just in time,” customized and learner-centered, for managers, employees and independent workers in today’s competitive work environment. These programs overcome the traditional constraints of location and time. We will deliver what students need wherever they are, whenever they need it.

The Graduate School is a diverse yet unified organization, providing more than 1500 different courses worldwide. My vision is that we continue to work together to deliver excellent professional education to meet your future needs.

Dr. Jerry Ice

“Public service is a public trust. The highest obligation of every individual in government is to fulfill that trust. Each person who undertakes the public trust makes two paramount commitments: to serve the public interest and to perform with integrity.”

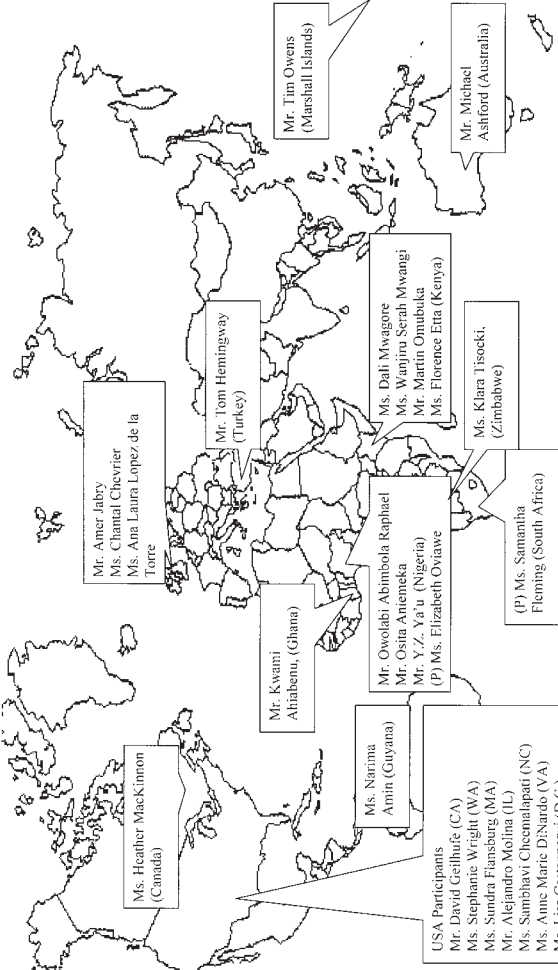
—Elliot Richardson

600 Maryland Avenue, SW
Suite 160
Washington, DC 20024-2520

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Online Learning Connects Students Digitally



**Information and Communication Technologies for Developing Countries:
(January-April 2002)**

(I) stands for "instructor."
(P) stands for participants in past sessions of the course who have signed up for the discussion group.
(G) stands for Guest.

Since its inception in January 2001, the Evening Programs course, Information and Communication Technologies for Developing Countries, has been going strong. The diverse group of students it attracts is interested in bridging the information gap between developed and developing nations.

"The course focuses on issues of development and how they interface with technical issues," says Dr. Stefan Gunther, program assistant, Evening Programs. "It blends policy discussions with information on computer infrastructures, the Web and the use of communications technologies to bridge geographic distances—especially in lesser developed countries."

Gunther notes that students who are from developing nations, particularly in Africa, are at a technical disadvantage when it comes to online learning since they cannot access the Web: "We have been able to circumvent this with our Blackboard Learning Platform. Our instructor, Barbara Phillip, can give these students off-line access with a CD-ROM."

For more information, contact Dr. Gunther at (202) 314-3652; e-mail: stefan_gunther@grad.usda.gov.

Take note...



Long-Term Health Care

Course Code: BENE7010D

Half-Day Sessions:

March 11, 2002
Washington, D.C.
Tuition: \$79

March 11, 2002
Washington, D.C.
Tuition: \$79

Course Code: BENE7012D

Full-Day Sessions:

April 30, 2002
Billings, Mont.
Tuition: \$215

May 7, 2002
San Antonio, Texas
Tuition: \$215

May 9, 2002
Dallas, Texas
Tuition: \$215

May 14, 2002
Albuquerque, N.M.
Tuition: \$215

Visit our Web site at
www.grad.usda.gov for
more information.

Pre-Retirement Planning

Course Code: BENE7002D

This three-day course explores federal retirement benefits, social security, life and health planning, Thrift Savings Plan options and financial and estate planning. You will receive the companion Retirement Planning Guide as a supplement to normal course materials. This course is for Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees within 10 years of retirement. Spouses are encouraged to attend at no additional charge. Contact your regional training center for more details. The tuition is \$95; for additional dates and locations, visit our Web site at www.grad.usda.gov.

Dates and locations:

April 1–3, 2002:
Anchorage, Alaska
Riverside, Calif.

April 2–4, 2002:
Oak Brook, Ill.

April 3–5, 2002:
Boise, Idaho
Oklahoma City, Okla.

April 8–10, 2002:
Honolulu, Hawaii
Gulfport, Miss.
Billings, Mont.

April 9–11, 2002:
Middletown, R.I.

April 15–17, 2002:
Sacramento, Calif.
Memphis, Tenn.

April 24–26, 2002:
Harrisburg, Penn.

April 29–May 1, 2002:
Jacksonville, Fla.

Consulting Skills for Human Resources Professionals

This course is for human resources professionals and other generalists and specialists who advise line managers. Participants analyze and review competencies for effective business partnering, assess strengths and developmental needs and develop measurable long-term solutions to organizational needs. Tuition is \$395. Upcoming dates and locations are: April 1–2, 2002 in Baltimore and April 25–26, 2002 in Columbus, Ohio.

Do You Need to Update Your Mailing Address for the New Training Catalog?

Look for a card in the mail announcing the upcoming mailing of the 2003 Nationwide Training Catalog. If the mailing address on the card is correct, you will receive your catalog in July. If you need to update the address, now is the time! Call (202) 314-3444 or e-mail: pubaffairs@grad.usda.gov.